OUR FAITH

Published by The Unitarian Christian Fellowship

Purpose:--"To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man."

VOL. 2 MAY, 1948 NO. 9

A Prayer

Eternal Goodness, in thy presence our thoughts are touched by beauty, wonder and love. Though betimes we walk in shadowed valleys because of this world's evil, to come before thee, to hear again thy still small voice, uplifts our souls and heals the hurt of our hearts. Help us, as we seek thee, to know thee as the Great Shepherd of our souls: whom to trust is perfect freedom.

O, God, our Father, we thank thee for the spirit within which reaches beyond itself to thee in prayer. Though the mystery of thy love and purpose is beyond our full understanding, we bless thee for the inward peace and enriching faith of quiet moments. Lead us by thy grace beside still waters, and put in our hearts a little more of love eternal.—Amen.

John Haynes Holmes on Brotherhood

(From a sermon delivered at the Community Church, New York City)

This word (brotherhood) has a divine as well as a human significance. It involves relationships not only with men but with God. **For how can we be brothers if we are not first of all children of God?** It is curious how men, in this materialistic age, try to divorce the concept of God from religion. But it can't be done! The thought of brotherhood came into the world with the idea of the one God as the Father of mankind. And if this thought is growing dim today, it is because the central light of the divine is fading from men's hearts. "Have we not all one Father," cried the ancient Hebrew prophet; "hath not one God created us?" **This is the basis of brotherhood. Without this thought of God, there can be no oneness of mankind.** And no love to bind us "all in one and one in all!" "We love," wrote the Apostle John, "because God first loved us."

Present Trends in Unitarianism

ALEXANDER WINSTON
(Minister, First Parish, Portland, Maine)

In a fellowship of free and independent churches, no one can dictate to his fellows what they shall be and believe. However, opinion expressed in a kindly and generous fashion is good for us all. In my opinion the following elements in our fellowship are detrimental to our present and jeopardize our future:

(1) **Secularism.** This is to conduct ourselves without serious reference to a God who matters, even though we give lip-service to the idea of "something" behind our world. We need a return to a living, creating, judging, loving God, before whom our major decisions are to be laid.

(2) **Humanism.** This is to assert either that God is unknown, unknowable or sheer illusion. We have at least one minister who is a professed atheist. Humanism catches the temporary fancy of the non-religious mind, but can offer no permanent religious satisfaction. Nor is a luke-warm, vague theism enough. Christian theism, that is, God as Jesus knew Him, is what we need.

(3) **Freemindism.** This is to say that we offer people freedom to think as they please. Do they need to come to our churches for that privilege? No one can live upon so vacuous, so impotent a concept. We need an affirmative faith in God, Jesus Christ, the Christian church, immortality,

etc., if we are to prepare our people to meet life's demanding issues.

(4) **Scientism.** This is to say that religion need only be "scientific" to be great and modern. But science is one specialized discipline, only partially applicable to the moving vital enterprise that we call human life. Though science is a good tool it cannot create religious faith. We need a frank recognition that the moral, emotional care of our experience is non-scientific.

(5) **Anti-Christianity.** This asserts that we are more than Christian, better than Christian, and, if need be, non-Christian. Rather, we need to try humbly to be as Christian as possible in the pure and simple meaning of the term.

(6) **Pamphletism.** This is the belief that by impersonal methods of up-to-the-minute publicity we shall capture the mind of Americans. Really, religious growth is based upon satisfying personal relationships within the communities of which our churches are a part.

(7) **Sectarianism.** This is the feverish attempt to show ourselves different from other religious bodies and better than they are. We who claim to eliminate religious barriers are among the most narrowly sectarian and chauvinistic of religious groups. We need quietly to buckle down to the task of doing our Christian job the best we can. If we **must** feel superior, that will at least give us a sound basis for it.

There is every possibility for Unitarian churches to take a respected place among the finest Christian churches that exist. The door is open. All we need to do is to return to the point of view that the primary business of the church is religion.

"If What I Was Taught by My Father . . ."

MAXWELL SAVAGE

(Minister Emeritus, First Unitarian Church, Worcester, Mass.)

If what I was taught by my father, that "religion is man's attempt to come into right relations with God," is right, what shall be my attitude toward those humanists who consider themselves religious, carry on services in churches, and yet dismiss God?

Churches are the natural outcome of this attempt to come into right relations with God. Are they any longer churches after God has been shown the door?

From the time the first man stood at right angles to the earth and began to question his world and to relate himself to the Unseen powers Whose manifestations he experienced, from then on until men climbed to the mental and moral and spiritual heights where they found the Inward God who requires justice, mercy and humility, all that long, long way, religion was and still is this attempt.

Is it fair so to define religion as to seem to narrow it, although in reality not doing so? My answer would be, "yes." The word, like many others, needs to be saved from abuse. We hear it misused on all sides today, as, for instance, the statement that communism is a "religion." You might as well call gluttony or eroticism religious, because each has its devotees. The word "religion" rings true only when applied to man's attempt to come into right relations with God.

What would be our attitude toward such humanists as "they who deal only with positive facts and the natural phenomena and properties of knowable things, excluding inquiry into causes?" They who dismiss God, the soul, prayer, and immortality as imponderables?

I think we should treat them, without condescension, as expressions of a passing phase of science, wherein "intelligence has deprived man of all reason for existence by destroying, in the name of science still in its cradle, the doctrines which up till now gave a meaning to individual life, a reason for effort, a transcendent aim to attain, namely, the religious."

These words are from the introduction to a great book, "Human Destiny" by Lecomte du Nouy. I wish every Unitarian could read at least its introduction. He would receive new courage and argument for the reality of God and spirit. I believe we should not hesitate to express regret when humanists use churches which have been dedicated to religion and to the permanent realities for the merely passing involvements of man no matter how noble these latter may appear.

Shall we run to wild extremes of excitability against them? No! They will pass,

Make Your Reservation!

In Anniversary Week, the Unitarian Christian Fellowship will meet for supper on Tuesday, May 25, at the (new) Old South Church, Copley Square.

Dr. George H. Williams of the Harvard Divinity School will give the address: "The Church: Unitarians and the Historic Community of Faith."

Make your reservation now with Rev. Paul H. Chapman, 33 Glen Green, Winchester, Mass. Tickets for the supper are $1.00.

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and their dust will settle. Let us put our faith in the fact that man is not only a moral but essentially the religious being of earth, and continue on our way.

Our Tacit Assumptions

CHARLES E. PARK
(Minister Emeritus, First Church, Boston, Mass.)

Kipling describes heaven in a couplet that at one time was often quoted from our pulpits:

"All for the joy of working, and each in his separate star
Shall paint the thing as he sees it, for the God of things as they are."

Our Congregational polity tries to be that kind of heaven on earth. Its theory is that so long as a man can command respect for his motive, sincerity and integrity, he deserves freedom to articulate both his philosophy of life and method of worship in ways that shall be authentic to him. So Congregationalism says: You may have your separate star, so long as it is a star; and you may paint the thing as you see it, so long as it is something; and you may do it all for the God of things as they are, so long as your objective is recognizable, however remotely, as worthy and worshipful. In other words, Congregationalism does apply a sort of categorical imperative: Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become a universal law. Formulate your belief and worship in such a way that, if it became universal, it would benefit all. On that condition you are a free man.

That is splendid; but how does it work out? One man uses his freedom to fashion his personal concept of God; another, to flatly deny God's existence. One man uses his freedom to form his private interpretation of Christ; another, to ridicule Christ as a mere myth. One man uses his freedom to construct his own religion and method of worship; another to repudiate religion root and branch.

The only resolution we can find for this dissonance is the claim that we are all lovers of freedom. But since freedom is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end, we are at once confronted by the question: Freedom to do what? And since we can think of no purpose that we dare to suggest as common to all and at the same time definite enough to be a distinguishing objective, we have to take refuge in the lame answer: Freedom to seek the Truth. Now if "the Truth" were a commodity like the Golden Fleece, concrete and precious, hidden in a dense forest, guarded by a dragon, waiting for a boat-load of Argonauts bold and free to come and find it, this would be an intelligible answer. As it is, it is like trying to hide behind a ladder. Our surmise is that "the Truth" is an intricate complex of facts and forces, realities, laws, potentials, in themselves morally neutral, modified by ever-changing relativities and fluid contexts, a sequence of shifting kaleidoscopic patterns whose impact on the mind often surprises the most confident prophet. Freedom will never lead to a knowledge of "the Truth." It is only as a man uses his freedom to do something specific that he begins to stub his toe against "the Truth." We seem to remember that the greater part of our boasted "Truth" was not discovered by the free man, but by the dogmatist.

We do not want to find any Greatest Common Denominator in our Fellowship; but we would dearly love to find a little one; some strong hidden thread of steel running through all the many-colored beads; something to give us unity and character and confidence in each other; something to classify us as a distinct body worthy of everyone's trust, and working together on a cluster of tacit assumptions whose nobility all must admit.

We cannot abide creeds; but we cannot escape tacit assumptions. Everything

we say or do rests on several of them. Every noun and verb we use flushes a covey of them. The very words, Religion, Worship, Church derive their meanings from the tacit assumptions on which they rest. And no man can be honest when he knows that his tacit assumptions disagree with those of his friends and neighbors. Every one who contemplates joining forces with us, whether as layman or minister, wants first to get some idea of what we are and where we stand. A list of our tacit assumptions would give him that idea. To make it a test of membership goes entirely against our grain. All we could say is: Dear Sir, this statement of tacit assumptions will tell you as much about the Unitarians as can be truthfully told. We do not ask you to agree; we ask only that you read it with care. We leave it entirely to your own honor and sense of decency to decide whether or not you belong among us.

Merely as a humble suggestion, would the following tacit assumptions be satisfactory? Probably not; but anyway here they are.

We tacitly assume:

That there was a time when there was neither matter, motion, life, nor law; the primeval nothingness.

That something could have emerged out of this primeval nothingness only through the creative act of an Original Cause, Himself uncaused; and whom we call God.

That the word "God" is purposely an open word, properly applicable to every honest concept and every sincere delineation of the Divine nature, from the simplest and most concrete, to the most abstruse and general.

That religion is the sense of being bound into the wholeness of God's being, a fragment of His reality.

That worship is time consciously spent in the presence and contemplation of God, in absorbing His spirit, and learning His will.

That a church is an assembly of religious persons seeking an environment of associations and influences most conducive to their purpose of worship.

That the ministry is a form of human service designed to aid souls, through the contagion of one worshipper on others, in seeking a more vivid awareness of God's presence, and a more personal devotion to His ways and purposes.

Unitarians Must Recover Jesus

PALFREY PERKINS
(Minister, King's Chapel, Boston, Mass.)

Although nothing in history has been more scrutinized and criticized than the meagre record of Jesus' life, and although interpretations and conceptions of his nature have been varying and transient, nevertheless in the human experience of so-called "Western Civilization" his moral power and spiritual appeal are permanent and supreme. Somehow modern man—though reluctant to express it—acknowledges in his soul that the vitally creative thing he can contribute to the rebuilding and redeeming of "Western Civilization," is a loyal and hopeful faith that Christ's kind of living brings God near to men, and essentially summarizes the final meaning of human life.

The increasing unwillingness to recognize this is one of the greatest weaknesses of modern Unitarianism. We have bent every effort to explain and verify facts about Jesus, and have recovered to our own satisfaction his humanity from an orthodoxy which dehumanizes him. But have we missed something? Have we succumbed to what Professor Cadbury calls "The peril of modernizing Jesus?" Do we honestly reckon with the mystery? Do "our estranged faces . . . . miss the many-splendored thing?"

We know, of course, that all the creedal definitions of his nature ever framed are only inadequate formulas, descriptions of the indescribable. But, by the same token, too often we ignore the grandeur of the conviction—the faith—that in Jesus there was a spiritual force of such beauty and power, that men have been impelled to express the inexpressible and to call him "God."

Unitarians ought to be the first to see that spiritual force, not as something unin-

telligibly strange and different, but as something of which there are hints and glimpses in every child of God. In a time when so many theories and philosophies of life masquerade as religion, Unitarian Christianity must begin with an affirmation of God, and find satisfaction in accepting the mysterious but simple fact that the light of God does shine in the face of Jesus Christ.

Unitarianism Today

JOHN C. PETRIE
(Minister, First Unitarian Congregational Church, Houston, Texas)

Unitarianism today is not putting its best foot forward. It is injuring itself with other Christians and is in danger of destroying its own character. It has been asserting that the only binding tie among its members is a passionate devotion to the principle of absolute freedom.

Such a statement is of course absurd on the face of it. Unitarians do not believe its members are absolutely free. For instance they do not believe that racketeering, profiteering, or warmongering are compatible with their principles. Of freedom by itself the philosopher Lotze wrote, "What good is it to be always sharpening a knife that is not to be used in cutting something?" Or as Chesterton used to put it, "The mind like the mouth should be opened in order to close on something."

That the absurdity of the "free mind principle" is being recognized by a few Unitarians appeared recently when a Committee on recruiting for the ministry reported that "young men will not give themselves to something which is without form and void."

The Humanistic Plus of Christian Faith

VIVIAN T. POMEROY
(Minister, First Congregational Parish, Milton, Mass.)

It is a commonplace that Christianity is more than theism. The early Christian Church insisted on adding faith in Christ to faith in God. This was a very vital movement of theological thought. What human need was behind it? Where was the driving necessity? If we conceive God as the creative energy in all life and the universal presence, he is immeasurably greater than any individual born in time and within the limitations of human nature. Then, believing in the greater, why should it be so important that we believe in the less?

James Martineau contended that we are always worshipping images, at least mental images. He went on to assert that the only thing to save us from idolatry is to worship Christ as the image of God. To those who have little knowledge of the scope and richness of Unitarian thought in the past, that does not sound like a Unitarian thing to have said. But Martineau's point is well taken. Ethically and spiritually, we cannot escape our need for some image of God. Christianity would have us take our image from Christ. Let him be the norm in our thought of God.

There is ample reason for calling this the humanistic plus of Christian faith. Without this plus, it seems there is a strange diminution of moral and spiritual power. We must accept ourselves; and the Universal does not attract us in a really moving way until it is focused in human life, and especially, we being individuals, in an individual life. At its full stretch, Christianity has always preserved this focus; and undoubtedly its deep psychological reach is concentrated in the person of Christ.

If you want a photograph of a landscape, you cannot get it by exposing your film to diffused daylight. The light must converge through the lens, or you will be left with a senseless blur. It is quite true, gloriously true, that many things, many persons, have acted as lenses through which religious truth has been impressed upon the human soul. "In your face I have seen the Eternal," said the dying philosopher to his wife. But there has arisen no more satisfactory human focus of God than we find in Christ—in his teachings, his life, his death, his immortal influence, and in that unbroken continuance of human lives to which we pay best tribute when we hail them as "Christly" lives, whatever their clan or formal badge may be. In such humanity is the highest God we know.

There are ever-recurring times and circumstances when to talk to a man about impersonal ideals is like describing a gorgeous winter sunset to one who is freezing

to death, and to urge belief in God is about as helpful as pointing out the ocean to one who is panting with thirst upon a raft. A man must have something nearer to his own life and need than that. The ideal must become actively real, and God become one of us. Herein is the undying potency of the Christian gospel, which is greater than any particular doctrine or church.

In our Unitarian book there is at least one hymn which can lift theists and humanists above the restrictions of their opposed views. We all can sing, and in full-throated tones of profound sincerity, with William Blake:

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity, a human face;
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

From a Reader

Rev. Merrill O. Bates, of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, writes: "In the February issue of **Our Faith** Dr. Rowland Gray-Smith presented five basic points to be incorporated in proposed new By-Laws of the A.U.A.

"I heartily endorse the following:

(1) Election to the denomination's governing council of people chosen by the people in their district to represent them.

(2) All nominations to be on the same footing.

(3) A 'listeners' gallery' at deliberations of the governing council and provisions for open hearings."

Mr. Bates expresses misgivings about the fourth principle, which would make the various executives responsible directly to the Board of Directors, but is in full accord with the fifth, which would give the **Christian Register** its own board of directors.

R. G. S.

Not Enough

LESLIE T. PENNINGTON

(From the Calendar of The First Unitarian Church, Chicago, Ill.)

"It is not enough for us at Easter-Time to toy with the pagan joys of the returning Spring, with birds and flowers, and the liberation of the season, important as these things are after the long and dreary months of winter. Behind them all there is something much greater."

The Fatherhood of God

CARL BIHLDORFF

(Minister, First Parish, Brookline, Mass.)

Have you ever wondered how man arrived at the idea of God's Fatherhood? Jesus was not the first to speak of the Eternal in terms of Fatherhood. From Genesis through Job God is known by many names: El, Elyon, Elohim, Yahweh, Jehovah —to name some of them. But in the Psalms and in the writings of Isaiah, the conception of God as a Father first appears.

Then came Jesus with a revelation of God's Fatherhood so appealing to the hearts of men, so vivid in its portrayal, so wonderful in its promise that today a third of the world calls him the Son of God.

The Old Testament characterizes God as a Father but four or five times. In the Gospels, which are but one-eighth the length of the Old Testament, Jesus speaks of Him as a Father one hundred and forty times. He rarely referred to the Eternal save in terms of Fatherhood.

For many people, God is little more than a chilly philosophical abstraction. His mercy and love, His Fatherhood, are to them empty words, for the idea their minds conceive is revealed in words like these: God is "that interaction between individuals, groups and ages which generates and promotes the greatest possible mutuality of good."

Others experience God only in the objective world of nature. Their hearts have been healed and sustained in contemplating the beauty and the glory of the visible universe. And few would deny that in moments of quiet appreciation nature can lead one into an experience of joyous worship. But the setting which inspires some may confuse others, for nature frequently raises as many questions as she answers, and to our mortal vision her paradoxes can be most disquieting.

It is when one turns from nature and philosophy to the revelation of God in Jesus that he understands the unique place he holds in history. For Jesus did not merely define God in terms of Fatherhood; he boldly declared, "He that hath seen me, hath seen in the Father." Is it any wonder that the hearts and minds of men were stirred by his gospel? God is not an im-

personal force, he said. He is more than a divine melody that haunts human hearts, colors sunsets, touches nature with beauty. God is our Father; His love and justice, compassion and nature you have seen through me!

The weakness of much liberalism today is that its inherited ethical teachings lack the backing of a meaningful and dynamic faith. Schweitzers do not go to Africas, nor Grenfells to Labradors, for the sake of philosophical abstractions and moral relativities. Religious faith, if it is to have consequences in human life, must be a faith in something eternal, triumphant, absolute.

A professor in one of the graduate schools at Columbia University was to give a Sunday afternoon address in a neighboring church, and his son, aged four or five, begged to go along. After the meeting, they started homeward. The small lad, trying to keep up with his father said, "Daddy, let me hold your hand." His hand was so tiny, all he managed to do was to cling to his father's forefinger. Two "long" blocks later, with his hand even more tired than his legs, he said, "Daddy, I can't hold you any more; will you hold me?"

The Fatherhood of God offers us the same promise, for we are sons and daughters of an Eternal Love that forever upholds us. This is the heart of our Christian gospel.

Humanity desperately needs the strength and the confidence which come from this gospel, this "good news" of God's Fatherhood, if it is to possess the courage, the determination, the consecration that will build the Kingdom of Brotherhood on earth.

"Indians in Our Midst"

CLAYTON BROOKS HALE

(Minister, Channing Unitarian Church, Rockland, Mass.)

There is an interesting story of the early history of Tennessee. According to this tale, an Indian band raided a pioneer settlement and after murdering almost all of the inhabitants, carried away captive some of the little boys of the settlement. Years passed, and in a skirmish with the Indians the Tennesseans took some of the Indian warriors prisoners. Among them were a few with faces almost white. When the news spread through the settlement two of the mothers came to see if by chance the men with white faces could be the little boys who were taken from them years before. They walked along the line of prisoners peering into the wild faces; but it was in vain. Suddenly one of the mothers, with a yearning heart, began to sing softly a crooning lullaby she had often sung to her son when he was a child. The effect was startling. All at once a sturdy figure broke from the line and came cautiously toward her. They looked at one another for a long time, she still singing, until finally the wild man fell on her shoulder and wept for joy.

The Indians of greed and secularism, the savages of fear and cynicism have imprisoned our world. There is no institution left to reclaim it except the Christian Church. Certainly politics is not doing it. Education is failing to meet the requirements of an Atomic Age. International and government machinery is not making conspicious progress toward reclaiming the world. The Christian Church is the only organization which untiringly marches up and down the line of captured mankind, reminding man of his spiritual origin and heritage and seeking to win him back from his bondage to secularism with the triumphant song of the meaningfulness of life and the dignity and destiny of the human spirit under God. The Christian Church is the only permanent witness there is which constantly raises its voice against all the accumulated despair of a post-war world, and points man from the mud of humanism and materialism to the stars of life's spiritual significance and purposefulness. We cannot afford to live in our kind of world without such a witness. We cannot afford to let our Unitarian denomination slip into the grasping hands of those Indians of secularism who would separate us from such a witness!

Chisholm vs. du Noüy

ROWLAND GRAY-SMITH

(Minister, New North Church, Hingham, Mass.)

The American Unitarian Association has put out in pamphlet form a lecture by General Brack Chisholm, eminent psychiatrist, on "Revolutionary Changes in Sources of Security."

In so far as the lecture calls us to turn from superstition to reason it is not at all

revolutionary. Superstition has been renounced by good Christian men from the beginning.

So what can be the revolutionary change we are asked to make? So far as the reader can make out, we are asked to change from the security of laboring among men as collaborators with God to the security of simply collaborating with our fellow men. General Chisholm does not forthrightly condemn faith in God. He is content to speak only of "gods," and to repudiate them as a class along with "spirits" and "devils." And he wants our civilization to turn from "gods" and become wholly "scientific" and "intellectual." Thus we shall effect the revolutionary change to a purely human "source of security."

May we draw attention to the following quotation. It comes from **Human Destiny.** It was written by Pierre Lecomte du Nouy, LL.B., Ph.B., Sc.B., Ph.D., Sc.D

"It has been said that when, under the menace of death or torture, a man develops an explosive faith in God. It is because his faculties of intelligence are dimmed and that in reality he only reverts to ancestral superstitions. This is not certain, and it is quite possible, on the contrary, that the intellectual faculties, liberated from any contingencies, then attain a degree of extreme acuity which is seldom encountered in normal life. But, even if we admit that the presence of danger suppresses the value of thought, even if we admit that only the men who live quietly, in a peaceful home, have the power to reason sanely, then it seems that we must take into account the judgement of the majority of great men who have built up our science and our philosophy, who were believers. The vanity of a scientist who, without being sure of leaving the slightest trace in the history of science, decides that a Newton, a Faraday, a Maxwell, an Ampere, or a Pasteur, was intellectually inferior to him strikes us as reaching the limits of paradox."

"The distinction between Christianity and all other systems of religion consists largely in this, that in these others men are found seeking after God, while Christianity is God seeking after men."—T. Arnold.

The Golden Rule

ROBERT A. MILLIKAN

Civilization itself is primarily dependent upon the continuous spread throughout the whole of the population of the spirit of the golden rule, which, broadly interpreted, means the spirit of altruism or concern for the common good. Historically this spirit has been spread most effectively through the influence of the life and teachings of Jesus; but this influence is largely barred from the public schools because of the wise separation in the United States of church and state. It has actually in this country found its way into life of each oncoming generation chiefly through the Sunday School. Destroy that channel, and in my judgment you strike a blow at the very heart of our civilization.

Paradox

"Religion," says Albert Schweitzer, "is the search for a solution of the problem how man can be in God and in the world at one and the same time. . . We find this answer in the Gospel of Jesus: 'By living and working in this world as one who is not of the world'."

"OUR FAITH" is published monthly (except July and August) by The Unitarian Christian Fellowship, 27 Marlborough St., Boston 16, Mass. Mr. Theodore Browne, Chairman; Rev. Paul H. Chapman, 33 Glen Green, Winchester, Mass., Secretary.

Editor: Rev. Harvey Swanson, 538 W. Chestnut St., Lancaster, Pa.

Subscription price: $1.00 per year, payable to the Treasurer, Mr. Joseph E. Coulter, 101 Tremont St., Boston 8, Mass.

Contributions toward the expenses of "Our Faith" are gladly welcomed from all friends.

Extra copies of "Our Faith" in quantity may be secured, for distribution in local parishes, and for literature tables, from the editor, or from King's Chapel House, 27 Marlborough St., Boston 16, Mass.

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